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HINDU CHIPS FOR READERS OF GOETHE

In Hammer-Purgstall's *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens* (Wien, 1818), p. 108, the following legend is translated from Nizami's *Machsenol-esrar*, i. e., *Magazin der Geheimnisse*:

Herr Jesus, der die Welt durchwandert,
Ging einst an einem Markt vorbei.
Ein todter Hund lag auf dem Wege,
Geschleppt vor des Hauses Thor.
Es stand ein Haufe um das Aas,
Raubvögeln gleich, die Aeser fressen.
Der eine sprach: Es wird das Hirn
Von dem Gestank ganz ausgelöscht.
Der andre sprach: Was braucht es viel,
Der Gräber Auswurf bringt nur Unglück.
So sang ein Jeder seine Weise,
Des todten Hundes Leib zu schmähen.
Als nun an Jesus kam die Reih',
Sprach ohne Schmähn er guten Sinns,
Er sprach aus gütiger Natur:
Die Zähne sind wie Perlen weiss.
Dies Wort macht den Umstehenden
Verbrannten Muscheln ähnlich, heiss.

As is well known, these verses, with a slight change (in line 6), are found in Goethe's *Westöstlicher Divan: Noten und Abhandlungen—Allgemeines*.

Thus this legend has become common property, and other German writers have retold it.

The same tale occurs in the oldest collection of Jaina stories, in the *Avacyaka-Erzählungen* (ed. Leumann), Heft I, pp. 34-37. Leumann gives a number of different versions, some older, some younger. The legend is told of Vāsudeva, Vinhu, Hari, Kanha, Kesava, i. e., Vishnu or Krishna, of whom the Jainas have a number of tales.

One day Sakka, the king of the gods, in heaven in the midst of the gods, praised the virtues of Vāsudeva, saying: "Ah, the excellence of superior men like Hari, who only see the good side in men and things,

even if there are a hundred thousand faults!" One of the gods there, not believing this, went to Vāsudeva's city. Vāsudeva had set out on a pilgrimage to worship the Jina. The god assumed the form of a dead dog, black, of hideous aspect, smelling very badly, and thus lay near the road on which Vāsudeva was to return. When Kaṇha together with his retinue came back, all the people of his train covered their faces with their garments, went out of their way, and hurried on. But Vāsudeva walked ahead on the path just as before. When he came up to the carcass, he neither averted nor covered his face, but looked at the teeth of the animal and said: "The teeth of this dead dog are like a row of pearls."

I give this scrap without attempting to discuss the question which of the two stories is derived or borrowed. It is well known that many legends about Jesus occur in Persian literature. As regards Kṛishṇa, it seems clear that some of the many myths of this god were influenced by Christianity. Especially Albrecht Weber has tried to establish such a dependence. The sources of Nizami, the Muhammedan legends of Jesus, the relation between Christ and Kṛishṇa—all of these things have to be carefully investigated before the priority either of the Hindu or of the Persian version of our legend can be established, provided, of course, that no Indian form which clearly goes back to a time before Christ can be produced.

The reader will have noticed the resemblance of this story to Goethe's *Prolog im Himmel* and to the beginning of the Book of Job, which furnished the German poet with the model. But in this case I do not believe in a *nexus causalis* at all. The idea (conversation in heaven—disbelief—trial of the great or good) is natural enough, so that it can have sprung up independently in different lands and times. Compare *Indische Studien*, XV, pp. 410–17. Some of the parallels, however, given there by Weber, are no real parallels. I subjoin another Jaina story, in a work of later date and published in Jacobi's *Ausgewählte Erzählungen in Māhārāshtrī*, pp. 26, 27:

And one day the Indra of Sohamma, seated on his throne in the assembly hall of Sohamma, was seeing the play *Soyāmini*. At this juncture a god from the Isāna heaven whose name was Saṃgama, came to the Indra of Sohamma. And by the brightness of his body the splendor of all the gods present in the assembly hall vanished; as the stars at the rising of the sun, so the immortals became lusterless. When he had gone,

the astonished immortals questioned the Indra of Sohamma as follows: "Why, O Lord, has this god Samgama a splendor surpassing that of twelve sunrises?" Indra said: "In a former life he performed the penance called ayambilabaddamāna." Then the gods again questioned Indra as follows: "Is there also another who is endowed with such splendor and beauty?" Indra said: "In Hatthināura, in the Kuru race, there is a universal sovereign, Saṇamkumāra by name, whose splendor and beauty surpass even that of the gods." Thereupon the gods Vijaya and Vejaya-anta, not believing this, went in the form of Brahmans. Thereupon admitted by the doorkeeper they entered into the presence of the king. And they saw the king occupied in anointing himself with perfume and oil. They were astonished to see a perfection of beauty and other excellences even greater than the splendor of beauty described by Indra. And they were asked by the king: "Why have you come here?" They said: "Your beauty is being praised in the three worlds; from curiosity to see it (we come)." And again the king, proud of his extreme beauty, addressed them: "Hear, hear, O Brahmans! how could you have seen my beauty! Wait a little while till I enter the hall of audience." "Yes," said the Brahmans and went out. But the universal sovereign quickly bathed, and having put on ornaments, finery, and an elegant dress, he sat down on the throne. The Brahmans were called. When they saw his body they were sad. And they said: "Alas, that the beauty, grace, and youthful bloom of men should be seen one moment and then vanish!" Hearing this the universal monarch said: "Hear! why do you, utterly plunged in sorrow, find fault with my body?" They said: "Great king, the beauty, youthful bloom, and splendor of the gods remain from the first moment till only six months of their life are left; then they diminish. Those of men, on the other hand, increase till the middle of life has come; thereupon they wane. But a miracle is seen in regard to the brilliancy of your beauty and youthful bloom, for even now it has vanished in a moment like the friendship of a villain." The king said: "How do you know?" They told him the matter, beginning with the praises of Indra. And astonished he looked at his two arms, bedecked with armlets, and saw that they were dim; and he noticed that his breast also, adorned with the pearl necklace, was wan. And he reflected: "Alas for the instability of the samsāra! Alas for the vanity of the body! Even in such a short time beauty, youthful bloom, and splendor have disappeared. Therefore attachment to existence is not meet."

The king goes on descanting further on the vanity and inanity of life, bids farewell to kingship and realm, and becomes a wandering ascetic.

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